

[The Hot-Tamale Man]

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Redfield, Georgia B.

12/24/36 -cl- 890 words

“CHIHUAHUA” DISTRICT ROSWELL

THE HOT*TAMALE MAN

Many picturesque characters, of the Spanish American people, live in the district called Chihuahua, located in the southeast portion of Roswell.

Charlie Fowler - known as “Old Hot-Tamale” - lives in one of the many little adobe houses, of the Chihuahua district, which make this section of the city different with their clean swept dirt floors, white eashed walls, and tiny fireplace tucked in a cozy corner- [?] homes typical of the New Spain, which were built [?] in New Mexico after the coming of Coronado in 1540.

Old Hot-Tamale insists that if there were a drop of Spanish or Mexican blood in his veins, he would let it out. He was married in his early years to a Mexican woman, who made her departure from his home leaving behind mysteries, lies and many unpleasant situations, for the man to battle with, alone, until a woman with a heart came into his life, married him - mothered him - and was a real companion for many years. “Now I am eighty years old and need her”, said old Charlie, “and she has gone from me forever. Since she died I am helpless like a little child without her. C18-6/5/41-N. Mex.

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"After she was took from me I just went to sleep and didn't know anything for a long, long time. Now I cant pull my wagon of hot-tamales, like I used to do, [?] and the Roswell people miss the ol' tamale man they say. They like me. Friends come to my door often to [?] pass the time of day. Some men took my picture just yesterday, and the finest painters come from away off and paint me and my tamale wagon, and they want to write stories about me. I haven't told any of them what I am going to tell you, and you must get it all down good, for it's history, and they want to keep it here in Roswell, always.

"They are stories of things that happened, and things I saw, and heard in these parts long before you was born, when there wasn't nothing, anywhere 'round here closer than Fort Stanton.

"I guess now you must bear with me some, for my recollection gets to dodgin' roun' and roun' when I try hard to remember important places and times.

"I been burnt out here two times by a low Mexican, for revenge when he got mad at me. You're right mam, I dont talk like Mexicans talk, for I aint Mexican - thank God! I'm Indian mostly. My mother was a full blood Choctaw Indian. Dont make no difference what other blood I has. I am just a man of honor and of my word.

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"The first man I ever worked for in my life, besides my folks, was John Chisum when he lived in Denton County, Texas.

"I was a leader of pack out-fits on horses for him in 1887 and we would be gone five or six days at a time, working cattle. I had seven pack leading horses and five other pack-men had six.

"We would lead some and drive some, when we came to New Mexico by way of Castle Gap east of pontoon bridge on the Pecos River, where the old T X ranch used to be at Horse Road Crossing. We came up from there on the west side of the river, to Bosque

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Grande, about thirty five miles north east of where Roswell is now, but it was all wide dry prairie then, and lots of coyotes and prairie dogs and nothing else living until you got to six mile hill west and found antelope. The Pecos River was the deadline for buffalo. I never saw one west of the river in my life.

"I was with General McKenzie's outfit in 1872. He was a great Indian fighter, even before the time of Geronimo commenced his murdering and stealing. Geronimo was a terrible hard Indian and all New Mexico dreaded and feared him. But they say [?] there's honor even among thieves, and I never heard of him harming a woman or child.

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"He was a bitter old man after he was in captivity at Fort Hill. He would stand for hours facing [?] his old hunting ground, with his arms hanging helpless never saying a word. It aint because I have Indian blood in me I say it, but the whites crushed the Indian people who were here in this country first. Do you know what become of the Lost Tribe which came up missing when Moses was leading them through the wilderness? Well they swung around that mountain it was Mt. Ebo I believe - and they wandered 'roun and 'roun and finally crossed the narrow channel in the Canada course. They was the beginning of the Indian people Columbus found when he came. Once a lawyer asked an Indian, where he got some of his Masonary. The Indian said, "we always had it", and I believe they did have it before the whites.

"In 1874 I was with General Davison in U. S. 10th Cavalry trying to capture Lone Wolf a bad Indian who raided with the Comanches. He and eleven companies of soldiers, 2 [?] pieces of artillery (cannon), 78 head of cattle, and nine cow-boys. We pulled in and fixed up for a camp at White Fish , where we were going to cross McClelland Creek, and here come a stampede of buffalo. We fought buffalo from nine to eleven at night. We had to block the charging buffalo with the dead ones as we shot them to keep them from running through our camp 5 out-fit. We had been short on supplies, eating only one hard tack for a meal. After that we had plenty of meat.

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“What with Indians and buffalo you had to travel with your eyes open those days.

“I was manager of the bull ox train, for L. H. Anderson, buffalo hunter on the naked plains in 1875. I was one of the fifteen skimmers in camp. We worked over three and four hundred buffalo some days. In September the general course of buffalo traveling was south-west and in summer it was north-east.

I have skinned buffalo, herded sheep, cooked, drove bull ox wagons, and barbered here in Roswell. The last three years have doubled up on me for I've had it so hard since my wife died. I am all tired now. Some day I will tell you more. We will write a book of all the things I new and did, before I was the old hot-tamale man.”